ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 29

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
26 November 1980

In the era of Ronald Reagan, a need to name names

GARRY WILLS

COMMENTING on Victor Navasky's new book, "Naming Names" William Buckley's right-wing magazine, National Review, says, with what it takes to be irony: "Just what the country needs right now: another retelling of the tale of the Hollywood Ten."

That sentence is inaccurate in the first part; and its irony redoubles on itself in the second part. The book is about much more than the Hollywood Ten. It deals with the House Un-American Activities Committee's show biz investigation of show biz, which went well beyond the Hollywood ten; and with the blacklisting that went well beyond even the committee's antics.

And what book could be more timely as Ronald Reagan comes into office than a book about the blacklistings that Ronald Reagan claimed, in this campaign, never existed? A news magazine even said his vehement denial of the reality Navasky documents elicited one of the rare demonstrations of emotion from Reagan in 1980. No doubt the President-elect is too busy learning other things to sit down and read about the things that went on around him, unnoticed, in the past. It is his ability to notice future things that is the first priority now. But, for the rest of us, Navasky comes just in time: We should be braced for many of the realities Reagan denies.

Buckley's magazine suggests that liberals are about to tell their "time-honored liberal bedtime story" just because they're sore losers, will not face up to the fact that they lost this year's election. But that is what makes the book so important. The heroes of Navasky's book did not follow the cry of the moment—in their case, the cry to expose and humiliate friends who attended radical meetings.

Navasky's timeliness is underscored by the rush of some Reagan advisers to come up with their own "Huston Plan" for snooping on American citizens again. The Heritage Foundation, raising fears of a new Pearl Harbor, wants to rearm the CIA with its old unconstitutional weapons. (It is typical of the foundation's power of analysis that it claims our intelligence was faulty at the time of Pearl Harbor. Actually, without an unconstitutionally funded CIA, we had cracked the Japanese code before World War II. The failure was military and political, not a matter of intelligence.)

Defenders of Ronald Reagan say we do not have to fear the Heritage Foundation (or the Moral Majority, or whatever) because Reagan did not mean all his old warmongering rhetoric. They would persuade us that Reagan is bearable because unbelievable—and, all in all, we must devoutly hope he is to be trusted precisely because he lied.

But what if he was not exaggerating? Then the Heritage Foundation people will need defying, as HUAC did. And the stories of Lillian Hellman, of Arthur Miller, of Ring Lardner Jr. and the others who risked career and reputation to oppose what Ronald Reagan himself calls, opprobiously, "gummint" could not be more timely. The right-wingers say it is wrong "to inform on the informers—to hold them up to public shame the way HUAC held Communists up." But that means that reckless charges can never be answered. To honor the honorable is, of necessity, to make a judgment on the dishonorable. Navasky gives us the evidence and norms for sorting out those people Reagan could not even find. The real irony is that his supporters dare to use the very word "intelligence."